

Role of Public Relations to Prevent Hoaxes (Case Study of Instagram @Kemenkominfo)

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ABSTRACT

Public anxiety began when the world was shocked by the emergence of a new virus in December 2019 called Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) or the coronavirus, resulting in curiosity about data and information regarding government administration. This condition makes people compete to find information about the coronavirus which is followed by many hoaxes spreading through social media. In line with public unrest about the circulation of hoaxes on social media, one government agency that uses social media to follow the development pattern of digital era communication is the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Ministry of Communication and Information). The social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo, which is used as the public relations role of the Ministry of Communication and Information, seeks to continue to actively spread information amid the coronavirus pandemic through its social media platforms in order to minimize the circulation of hoaxes. The formulation of the problem in this study is to determine the role of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics' public relations in minimizing the hoax issue circulating on Instagram social media and the obstacles faced in minimizing the hoax issue. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The case study was conducted on Instagram @Kemenkominfo. Data collection was carried out by interviewing the Communication and Informatics Public Relations Online Media and the Ministry of Communication and Information's AIS (Automatic Identification System) Team, as well as observing instant messages in the form of voice messages and phone calls via the Whatsapp application. The results of this study indicate that the Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Information has carried out four public relations roles, namely as a communicator, building relationships, as backup management, and forming a corporate image during the coronavirus pandemic.

Keywords: Role of public relations, hoax, COVID-19, Instagram

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Regulation of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment Number 30 of 2011 (concerning General Guidelines for Public Relations in Government Agencies), public relations in government circles are institutional or individual activities, which carry out management functions through aspects of communication and information for the public as the organizer of interests or vice versa. The existence of public relations in government institutions plays a role in informing and disseminating the policies made by the government.

The role of government public relations is based on two basic facts, namely that the public has the right to know information, therefore government officials have the responsibility to provide clarity to the public, then to fulfill the need for input from the public, government officials ask the public to participate in supporting its creation. good government work program (Moore in Yenni, 2020: 21) [1]. According to research on the social media management platform HootSuite and social marketing agency We Are

Social entitled "Global Digital Reports 2020", it shows that nearly 64% of Indonesia's population is connected to the internet. From this data, it is said that internet users in Indonesia aged 16 to 64 have an average of 7 hours 59 minutes to use social media every day. The results of this research also state that Instagram's social media is in the fourth position after Facebook which has many users, which is 79% of the total population in Indonesia (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-indonesia>) [2].

The increasing number of internet users in Indonesia has led to increased intelligence and critical attitudes in society, resulting in curiosity about data and information regarding government administration and development which encourages government agencies to always update information quickly. One government agency that uses social media to follow the development pattern of digital era communication is the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominform). The social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo is one of the means used by the Ministry

of Communication and Information's PR to make it easier to interact with audiences in cyberspace.

Kominfo Public Relations must be able to provide services to the public in terms of information availability, as well as forming and establishing relationships with the public and the media. This is intended so that Kominfo public relations can be more developed, especially in information services. A large amount of information available plus the ease of obtaining information on social media raise public anxiety because some information has no benefit and is also misleading, causing an increase in the spread of fake news (hoaxes).

Audience anxiety increased when the world was shocked by the emergence of a new virus in December 2019 called Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) or Coronavirus. The virus, which was first detected in the city of Wuhan, China, has spread rapidly throughout the world (Merdeka.com, 2020) [3]. This condition makes people competing to find information about the Coronavirus. Unfortunately, the information circulating on social media is more hoax. This causes the public to divide their views when the available information differs from the actual conditions. People tend to ignore and do not try to find the truth about information circulating on social media. On the other hand, the community actually helped spread hoaxes. It is proven that since the beginning of the pandemic until June 4, 2020, Kominfo has found 850 hoaxes that have spread through social media [4].

Based on the background above, the formulation of the problem in this study is to determine the role of the Ministry of Communication and Information's public relations in minimizing hoax issues circulating on Instagram social media and the obstacles faced in minimizing the hoax issue. This study aims to determine the role of public relations in maximizing social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo in order to ward off hoaxes during the coronavirus pandemic.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Digital Communication Theory

According to Anwar and Rusmana (2017: 207) digital communication is a series of ways of communicating through digital messages that are easily formed, packaged, and presented, and have high appeal, and are able to have a large and broad impact. The development of digital technology has made communication even more limitless. This development also encourages the emergence of new media that brings interactive communication closer [5].

2.2. New Media Theory

According to McQuail (2011: 148) new media is all communication technology devices that have the same characteristics and are possible to digitize and have a wide reach as a means of communication [6]. New media that are currently developing rapidly have the ability to offer interactive relationships (Susanto, 2017: 380)[7]. A new

way to communicate interactively is through social media (Karjaluoto in Susanto, 2017: 383). According to Hartono (2018: 71) the internet network is a means for new media that has changed the relationship between audiences and the media. According to him, all forms of popular new media platforms are social media. Social media makes the relationship between audiences and media interactive [8].

According to Feldman (in Mudjiyanto, 2012: 5) new media has 5 characteristics, namely:

- (1) Manipulable: easy to adapt and can change in the process of manufacture, use, storage, and delivery.
- (2) Networkable: easy to share or exchange among multiple users at the same time.
- (3) Dense: all digital information can be stored using very little physical space.
- (4) Compressible: information can be summarized according to need.
- (5) Impartial: information in digital form is easily disseminated, regardless of whom it was made of and for what purpose the information was made [9].

2.3. Hoax (Fake News)

Pareno (2005 in Mustofa, 2017: 21) defines hoax as the incompatibility of news with actual events. Hoax is fake news whose purpose is to spread it so that newsreaders will believe in the false information circulating (Ramdan in Mustofa, 2017: 21). Hoaxes that develop on the internet are not only in the form of writing, but there are engineered images and videos that look real. In manipulating images or videos, it is often done by removing, changing, and even adding other elements to the image or video [10].

The massive spread of hoaxes has made the public concerned, the impact of this is that correct news and information will be difficult to find (Prmono, 2020: 305). Hoaxes can lead to prolonged accusations and have the potential to divide the community. If hoaxes are continuously spread through social media, gradually these hoaxes can be considered as truth [11].

The widespread of fake news or hoaxes on social media networks has made the public even more worried. Hoaxes that spread not only make the public look stupid with the false information presented but are also used by several parties to instigate and divide between communities which leads to a division between nations (Siswoko, 2017: 13) [12].

A book entitled Journalism "Fake News" & Disinformation published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019: 7-8) says that hoaxes or fake news are divided into two types, namely disinformation and misinformation. Disinformation refers to deliberate and orderly attempts to manipulate and confuse people by spreading false information. Meanwhile, misinformation refers to information that is misleading and disseminated accidentally without any hidden manipulative or malicious intent. Both of these can be problems in the community, but disinformation can be said to be more dangerous, because it is usually carried out in a structured manner and is reinforced by automated technology, and is supported by good resources [13].

2.4. The Role of Public Relations

The four roles of public relations according to Ruslan (2016: 26) are as follows:

1) As a communicator.

This means that public relations are a liaison between the agencies represented and the public. In any organizational communication activity, the process is carried out in two directions (reciprocity). In this case, one party carries out the communication function as a form of information delivery activity, then on the other hand the delivery of communication in the form of messages and public opinion.

2) Fostering relationships.

This means that public relations strive to maintain positive and mutually beneficial relationships between agencies or institutions and their audiences. Public Relations builds positive relationships and good relations with the public which is the target or target, including internal and external publics, in particular fostering mutual trust so as to gain mutual benefits between the agency or institution and the public.

3) Have a role as backup management.

This means that public relations play a role in supporting the management function of agencies or institutions. Public Relations acts as a supporter in carrying out the management function of an organization or agency. In order to support the management function, according to the theory, the process goes through the well-known stages, namely POAC, which stands for planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling.

4) Forming a corporate image.

This means that public relations play a role in building an image for the agency or institution. Public Relations is successful in carrying out the ultimate goal of public relations campaign work program activities, from publication to promotion.

From the several theories described above, it can be concluded that the role of public relations is as a communicator, building relationships or relationships, being back up management, and enhancing the image of an agency or institution [14].

2.5. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Creswell (in Raco, 2010: 7) says that qualitative research is an approach that aims to explore and understand information by asking questions to research subjects that are general in nature but broad in scope [15].

According to Raco (2010: 7), another model of qualitative data is descriptive, in which the data produces a parable that the data to be presented is in the form of text. The reason the author uses a descriptive qualitative research approach is to describe the results of the study in the form of written words.

The method used in this research is a case study. A case study is part of qualitative research that intends to investigate a case more deeply by collecting and involving various sources of information (Raco, 2010: 49). The case

study in this research concerns the role of public relations carried out by the Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of Communication and Information through the use of Instagram social media in warding off hoaxes during the coronavirus pandemic.

In this study, the research subjects were determined using purposive sampling, which is based on certain standards determined by the researcher for research purposes (Kriyantokno in Maqruf, 2019: 45-46) [16].

The subject of this research is Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia. This means that researchers chose several members of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia to become informants in this research. Among others, Annisaa Bonita Pratiwi Putri as a Sub Division Officer for Online Media Management and Afif Fatur Rakhman as the AIS (Automatic Identification System) Team. The reason the researchers chose some of the informants listed was because of their experience, knowledge, and involvement in playing a role in public relations, as well as clarifying hoaxes on Instagram social media.

Data collection in this study was carried out by observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data analysis used by researchers is the Interactive Analysis Technique of Miles and Huberman. This technique analyzes based on three parts: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and testing the conclusions of Prawito (2007: 104-106) [17]. According to Meleong (2010: 332), researchers can re-examine their research by comparing them with various sources, theories, and methods. In this case, the researcher uses source triangulation, which means that it is a process of exploring and comparing the truth of information using data collection methods that are generated from reliable sources such as observation, interviews, and documentation. This method was chosen to maintain the validity of a study. Therefore, researchers can clarify the data that has been collected and then analyzed [18].

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Hoax data

The negative side of using social media in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic is widespread hoaxes. This is evident from the data on the findings of hoax issues that were obtained by researchers from the AIS (Automatic Identification System) Kominfo Team, namely during the Coronavirus pandemic period in December 2019 to October 2020 several times experienced an increase in the number of findings of hoax issues circulating in Indonesia.

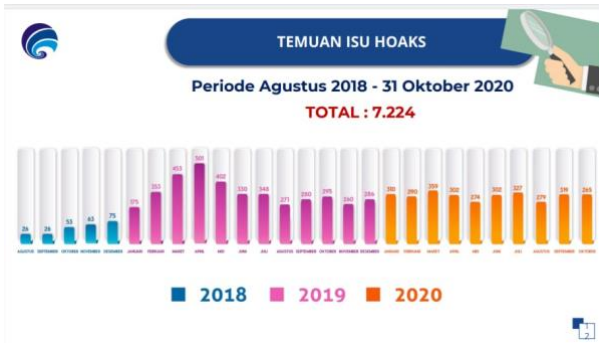


Figure 1 Hoax issue findings data for the period of August 2018 -31 Oktober 2020
Source: Kominfo AIS team

3.1.2. Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning information and electronic transactions (ITE)

From the data findings, the facts obtained regarding the Role of Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in preventing hoaxes during the pandemic period are by referring to Law No.11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE). The ITE Law was issued by the government on the basis of awareness of changes in the behavior of society and civilization globally regarding the use of information, communication, and media technology. The articles of the ITE Law contain rules and prohibitions that must be obeyed by the community when interacting and communicating through social media in cyberspace. Imposing sanctions for people who violate Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning ITE is listed in articles 27, 28, and 29.

3.1.3. Instagram Content Management @Kemenkominfo

Public Relations Kominfo manages the content on social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo is by presenting content that has the right information and messages, to meet public information needs. This is in accordance with the results of research conducted by Budi Prayitno (2017: 30) which states that not much information has been produced by the Ministry or Institution which is then shared through social media and this information can only be accessed through the Ministry or Institution website that has been installed. GPR (Government Public Relations) widget only [19]. The lack of publication of the success of government performance through social media can lead to the spread of hoaxes on social media because often this information is not conveyed to the public.

3.1.4. Utilization of Information Technology

Kominfo uses an AIS (Automatic Identification System) machine which is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) to filter and clarify hoaxes or fake news. This is intended to find data related to daily information raised by the media.

The results of data findings obtained from the AIS Team, then reprocessed by the Ministry of Communication and Information's public relations and published through the official website of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, namely kominfo.go.id. The control carried out by the Ministry of Communication and Information's public relations on the media aims to provide good information to the public.

3.2. Discussion

From the data findings, the facts obtained regarding the Role of Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in preventing hoaxes during the pandemic according to Ruslan theory include:

3.2.1. The role of ministry of communication and information public relations in warding off hoaxes

As a Communicator, The Ministry of Communication and Information's PR has a role as a communicator in conveying information to the public through social media is by creating educational content that contains information about clarifying hoaxes without forgetting how to check the truth of the hoax.

Fostering Relationship, The Ministry of Communication and Information's PR plays a role in fostering a harmonious relationship with the public through the social media @Kemenkominfo by answering public requests for content suggestions that must be made through the comments column. However, in practice, the communication carried out by the Ministry of Communication and Information through Instagram social media is only one way, because often the Instagram social media admin does not respond to public aspirations written in the comments column. The minimal effort of the admin of social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo in answering netizen's questions in the comments column made communication not work properly, namely two-way or reciprocal communication.

As Back-Up Management, in carrying out its role as the backup management of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics' public relations, it is divided into several steps, namely planning, organizing, activating, and supervising its Instagram social media, including:

Planning, in this case, the Ministry of Communication and Information Public Relations manages messages that will be published through social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo.

Organizing, in this case, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics' public relations organizing information that is currently trending. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, in the last few months the upload of social media content Instagram @Kemenkominfo has informed about matters related to government programs and policies in overcoming the spread of the Coronavirus, including disseminating information containing clarification of hoaxes circulating during the pandemic period Coronavirus.

Activation, in conducting PR activities, the Ministry of Communication and Information tries to run a special program on Instagram social media to ward off hoaxes, namely through Miss Lambe Hoax. However, in the last few months, the program has stopped running to avoid repetition of information between the Ministry of Communication and Information's online media platforms.

Supervision, based on direct observations made by researchers when carrying out internships at the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, in order to determine whether or not the publication of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics has been successful or not through social media, Instagram is carried out by seeing the perceptions of the public on uploaded content. Public perceptions can be reviewed through the number of likes, comments, and shares made by the public on content that has been published through social media @Kemenkominfo, then the data is collected and later evaluated by online media public relations staff at monthly meetings. This step is in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (Permenpan) No. 83 of 2012 concerning Guidelines for the Use of Social Media for Government Agencies, namely to identify and assess how the public perceives the agency.

Forming a Corporate Image, one of the Ministry of Communication and Information's steps in shaping a positive image of the public is to disseminate information through the social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo which contains the seriousness of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in handling hoax issues. This is reflected in the results of the publication made through the social media Instagram @Kemenkominfo that there are six cases of hoaxes about the Coronavirus that have entered legal channels.

3.2.2 Barriers to public relations of the ministry of communication and information in warding off hoaxes through Instagram social media

Barriers to Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Information in warding off Hoaxes through Instagram social media include low public awareness and digital literacy education is still centralized. The low level of public understanding and knowledge about the impact and threats of hoax spread through social media. This causes the public to be easily provoked into sharing news via social media so that indirectly contributes to helping the spread of hoaxes on Instagram social media. And the government through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology is still trying to provide digital literacy to the public, but local governments have not participated in many digital literacy programs, so massive digital literacy has not been implemented.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the formulation of the problem in this study, it can be concluded that Online Media Public Relations Ministry

of Communication and Information has carried out according to theory regarding the implementation of its role as a communicator, relationship builder, and image shaping. However, in its role as back-up management, it has not been entirely carried out by theory, namely planning, organizing, Actuating and controlling. In practice, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics' public relations does not continue the Miss Lambe Hoax program as an effort to minimize the spread of hoaxes through Instagram social media.

The obstacles felt by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics' public relations in warding off hoaxes, one of which is the tendency for people to be easily provoked and swallow news on social media. This is evidence of the low level of community literacy. Also, digital literacy that is encouraged by the government through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology is still centered in the ministry only and is not carried out massively by local governments. Therefore, the digital literacy program that has been implemented is deemed not very effective, because the digital literacy provided to the community is not comprehensive and evenly distributed throughout all regions in Indonesia.

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